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ABSTRACT

One of 52 theoretical papers on school crime and its relation to poverty, this chapter discusses experiences in the Human Relations Program at the University of Minnesota. The program has developed from one that offers undergraduate and graduate courses in human relations to one that also responds to requests from community agencies other than the schools for service, consultation, and evaluation. The broad range of concerns in the program includes examination of discrimination in laws, traditions, and practices of institutional racism, and how discriminatory attitudes affect both victims and members of the dominant group. The concern in this paper is focused on the attitudes and biases of teachers and how they influence current practices in the classroom and elsewhere in the school. (Author/MLF)

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HUMAN RELATIONS IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

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Introduction

The State Legislature in Minnesota mandated in 1973 that those learning to become teachers, and those already practicing as teachers, receive training in human relations. This gave rise to the Human Relations Program at the University of Minnesota. The Program has developed from one which offers undergraduate and graduate courses in Human Relations to one which also responds to requests from community agencies other than the schools for service, consultation, and/or evaluation. It is through experience in these capacities that material for this paper has been gathered.

While an explicit definition for the term "Human Relations" has been avoided, the area does deal with the historical and traditional systematic discrimination that has been practiced against members of minority groups in this country. There has been an internal struggle in the United States almost since the beginning of our history to extend equal opportunities to all citizens regardless of where they came from, what they looked like, what creed they brought with them, and their sex. The broad range of our concerns in the Human Relations Program includes examination of discrimination in laws, traditions, and practices of institutional racism, and how discriminatory attitudes affect both victims and members of the dominant

group. This latter aspect of the Program is the topic of this paper.

We conceive of four elements in discrimination and racism, as shown in Figure 1.

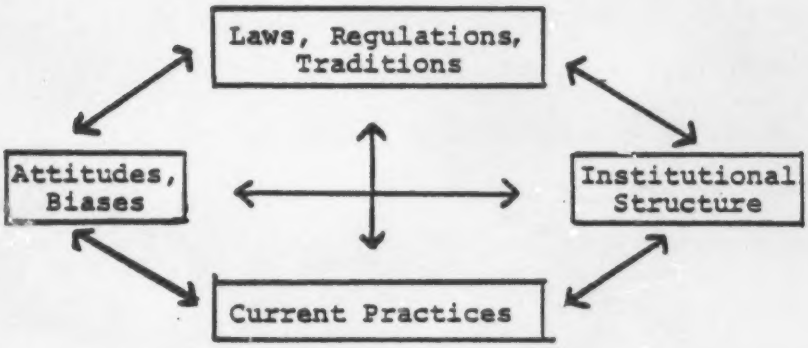

Figure 1. Factors in discrimination.

While we believe that the four elements of the "discrimination wheel" interact on each other in a continuous manner, our concern here is with the link in the wheel which deals with the individual teacher. Thus, while we remain concerned with the laws and regulations, and with the structure of the institution, we have focused our concern in this paper on the attitudes and biases of teachers and how they influence current practices in the classroom and elsewhere in the school. We are concerned with the attitudes of both the teacher and the pupils, and the influence these attitudes have both upon the victims and upon the oppressors, regardless of whether such attitudes

are intentionally prejudiced or not.

It is not our intent to fault any particular person or group of persons. Many reasonable persons have, through their own efforts, identified some of their own beliefs and practices as racist and, in so doing, have discovered the unfairness of th[illegible] resulting actions. We present this paper in the ho[illegible] encouraging this sort of self-examination and discovery. We have found that, once a person sees his or her activities as really unfair in a systematic way and unjustified in fact, that person can begin the process of shedding the bias. We see discrimination as an issue central to some school crimes, and peripheral to others. We see bias itself as an undesirable attitude for educators; discrimination, resulting from bias, is, of course, illegal.

Minority: Attitude and Category

In the Human Relations Program, we use the notion of attitude as a complex aspect of people. It is comprised first of an affective component, in which the person feels a certain way toward the minority members as if the feeling and the minority member were identical elements. A second component is the cognitive aspect of the attitude; this is usually a compound of ideas and beliefs about the minority group and, again, about each of its members as if they were interchangeable parts (Scots people are all stingy, Blacks are lazy, etc.). Third is an action

component, in which the person acts in certain ways toward members of the minority. The three components, feelings, thoughts, and actions, are all parts of the complex we call attitude.

The cognitive aspect of the attitude is, in part, a process which justifies the feelings and behaviors toward the target object. A second part of the cognitive component is a collection of ideas about how individuals in the group act, about their intentions, and/or about their behaviors. We call the collection of ideas "categories." From what we have observed, many categories are deeply rooted in our common lore about human nature. We hear from earliest childhood that some people act in certain ways. "Criminals," as a term, is a linguistic reflection of this phenomenon. A person who has committed a crime is a "criminal," and is expected by many to act differently than a noncriminal. Our linguistic usage suggests that a "forger" might have trouble signing personal correspondence with his own name. There is a compelling "truth" to this perception. Most of us have known people who repeat things with a seemingly unerring consistency: one might always be late, another might like flashy clothes, and yet another might be counted on to tell the latest joke. It seems that there are people who behave in accordance with some internal template for action. A part of our conceptual machinery is the notion of "personality." This leads us to conclude

"types" of people have habitual behavior patterns (criminals steal; shy people never shout). This notion of personality views each of us as having internal mechanisms which predispose us toward certain actions.

One of the problems which we have encountered frequently in the schools, as elsewhere, is that many persons, including teachers and pupils, are prejudiced against minorities. Often what makes prejudice such a thorny problem is that many persons are well-intentioned and exert considerable personal effort to suppress their usually negative <u>feelings</u> about minority-group members. But active attempts to suppress feelings, while well meant, are ineffective in erasing the mistaken ideas about minority group members, that is, the category of "minority group" remains in the cognitive machinery. Persons belonging to the category continue to be considered similarly, whether or not there is evidence to support this. When the category is established, the person having the category treats the person in the category as if the category were really valid. The category holder finds it easier to dismiss evidence challenging the category than to change or dismiss the category.

The problem is heightened because such a person often vehemently denies the prejudice and assumes a defensive posture against its suggestion, rather than focusing on his or her own thoughts about the category to see if there

really is something wrong with those thoughts. (While we have not tested the theory, we think that category holders may be inured to cognitive challenge of the category because it implies feelings against the members of the category which they are at pains to deny.)

What surprised us is that, in examining our own unfounded categories, we found prejudices, and the feelings part of our attitudes actually changed as a result of checking out our thoughts about individuals in the category. When we tried this in small-group labs, we found that others, also, seemed to change their feelings toward minority-group members when they began to question the elements in their categories.

We are not saying that all categories are inherently bad, nor that they should be expunged from our mental machinery. As Allport states, categories are a mental shortcut, so to speak, that permits condensing a great deal of information into simpler forms (Allport, 1958). We may, for example, have attitudes about basketball players, as a group, or about graduate students. Our feelings about them may not be negative; indeed, we may feel quite positive about them. Still, our categories may contain some ideas about them which are fairly accurate (generally, basketball players are tall, though some are "merely" six feet) and other ideas which are mistaken (all basketball players are not in the six-figure income bracket). Some accuracy is lost

in any catergory we might choose. The problem with attitudes usually begins with the feeling aspect: when the feeling part of the attitude is negative, we ususally find that the category associated with it contains negative and inaccurate elements or ideas about individual members of the category, causing us to predict inaccurately about their behavior, or actually to lead us to treat them unfairly.

We may have attitudes about people who "cheat." That is, we may feel that persons who copy the work of others, who exaggerate aspects of their own performance, or who change their statements depending upon the circumstances are "cheaters." We may have negative feelings about them, and generate a category of "cheaters" with elements that all cheaters are unreliable as sources of any sort of information, are poor sports in social activities, and will not repay debts. Still, psychologists have long demonstrated that students, for example, who display cheating behavior in one circumstance may not display it in another, and that some students cheat in one instance while others may cheat in another circumstance (Hartshorne et al., 1927).

Categories, as such, are damaging when two conditions obtain: one, when the elements of the category result in our treating members of the group differently than we would had they not been categorized, and two, when the elements of the category are inviolate, that is, go unchallenged by the person holding them.

Most of us have attitudes about minority groups. While in some cases attitudes about some minority groups are positive (usually when we are part of, or similar to, the minority group), our feelings about minority groups are usually negative, even though we may try and even succeed in forcing this out of our conscious awareness. "Black" is a category for most Americans; "Handicapped" is another group about which we have attitudes; and "woman" is yet another division toward which we have feelings, and about whom we have formed a category. In each of the three cases, the category is used to simplify, understand, and predict things about the persons who fit the label. But, as we have seen in the Human Relations Program, categories about minorities lead to thoughts and actions by educators and peers which do a disservice to the members of the category, and to the educational enterprise as well. In spite of the considerable advances our society has made recently in educating Blacks, the most blatant examples of discrimination still affect Black students. This is illustrated by the following example:

> Peter McClinton[1] had been told by his friends that taking English Literature from Mr. Sanders was futile. Black students, they pointed out, had a history of getting a rough time from Sanders, and not a single Black had ever passed the course. But Peter was insistent that he learn about Shakespeare, about whom he had read

[1]Names and descriptions have been altered to obscure the identity of the students, and situations changed to avoid identification of any persons mentioned in these case histories.

a great deal. "Maybe some of you guys aren't too bright," Peter said, shrugging off the warnings of upperclassmen. Peter enrolled in the predominantly white class along with five other Black students. On the first day, all the Blacks were assigned to the back row. Peter shrugged. It wasn't the most promising beginning he'd had, but neither was it the worst situation he'd encountered in this school, in which whites comprised 60 percent of the students. In class he often raised his hand during recitation, but was never called on. His test papers were all marked with red Xs though he knew his answers were better than some of those of white students which had been given good marks. And Peter observed the same treatment of all the Black students in the class. When Mr. Sanders was confronted by the principal regarding his behavior, as reported by Peter, Mr. Sanders stated that Peter's verbal and written replies were tangential, missed the point, and were such clear examples of puffery that he refused to encourage them. Peter's other instructors considered Peter one of the top students in the class.

It wasn't long before students in the literature class followed Mr. Sanders' example and were calling Peter "stupid." Peter recalled the warnings of his friends. Finally, before school one day, he and one of the whites in his literature class got into a fight--a good one, with lips lacerated against teeth, a broken finger, and bloody noses. Peter was summoned to the principal's office. Peter admitted throwing the first punch, but pleaded extenuating circumstances. Mr. Sanders demanded that Peter be expelled or he would press assault charges. On the basis of that, Peter was expelled for two weeks. Peter's grades began to slip, and he got into another fight for which he was again expelled. His reputation as a "troublemaker" was established and he didn't complete the year at school.

Peter was a victim of categorization by his teacher, Mr. Sanders. Mr. Sanders denied he was prejudiced; he considered Peter just another ignorant student who was

trying to "put on airs" by raising his hand, and Mr. Sanders chose not to honor any show-off. Mr. Sanders privately predicted that Peter would get involved in a fight, which happened. It is a cycle which had happened before in Mr. Sanders' classes. Actually, Peter did strike the first blow in this case, but only after considerable verbal harassment at the hands of white students in the class (who were simply following the example set by Mr. Sanders). Finally, Peter was pushed by several white students until he was forced into defending himself. His expulsion was inappropriate by the standards of most people. However, only Mr. Sanders and administrative staff were involved, and their categories were such as to prepare them to "see" such fights as aggressive attacks by Black students. No further investigation was deemed necessary.

One can see how the student body in this school becomes polarized, with the white students and some of the faculty against the Black students. It is difficult to anticipate anything but accelerated violence in this particular school. As it turned out, police finally had to be called in because the violence did escalate. It can be summarized, perhaps a bit tersely, by stating that this was a case in which categorization led to school violence.

Another case in which staff members utilized category thinking occurred at a residential school where disadvantaged youth are offered academic and vocational training:

A group of young men new to the school were in orientation. Five of them were in the program because they had been suspended from public school and were well known to the law. They were physically large, tough-appearing young Blacks. When they were moved from orientation into vocational training, they protested against being assigned vehicle repair. They wanted culinary arts. But the staff laughed at them, stating that they needed heavy exercise. The request for culinary arts, the staff thought, was a dodge to get out of work. The five young men, however, didn't like being denied what everyone else in camp enjoyed: their vocational preference. They armed themselves with bars and chains, and went to the automotive office. They threatened to tear the shop apart if they weren't transferred to the kitchen immediately. The police were called, and persuaded the five, at gunpoint, to lay down the weapons.

Then the inevitable question: what shall be done with the five? The wise Center Director overruled his staff and refused to press charges. Instead, he reassigned the five to the kitchen, with the understanding that if any of them made any sort of trouble they would answer to him personally. The Director suspected that such warnings were not needed. The five showed up the next day, and every workday for the next year, at 5 a.m. sharp to learn their trade. They worked hard and learned quickly. Through their extra efforts, Danish pastries were served at coffee breaks and regular meals improved dramatically. The five were offered good-paying jobs at the end of their tenure.

In this case, the discrimination centered about the categories that the staff had in their heads about large, Black students who looked fearsome (to certain staff) and who had police records. Actually, they were 18-year-old young men who simply knew what they wanted, and were angered at being refused, apparently because they looked different, what everyone else was given automatically.

Once this grievance was settled, no further major problems stemmed from these young men.

The examples we have given thus far are blatant and the reader may well feel that the implications of such examples would not escape notice in today's school. Actually, they are examples taken from good public schools in the year 1977. Still, the negative results stemming from categorization of minority students can take a more subtle form:

> The foster parent of a large, strong and "tough"-appearing Black student met with a school principal who had admitted the student partly because he needed a full-back on the football team. "Gee!" the principal said enthusiastically, "I'm really pleasantly surprised that your boy did so much better than I expected. If we had known how well he would do, we might have assigned him to different classes."

Of course the foster parent was upset! The principal had expectations about the student based on the catergory of "big, tough-appearing Black students" which apparently generated a category of ideas relating to poor school achievement. He based his expectations on this category, rather than on the real data he could have obtained by examining the boy's recent school work, information from the foster parent, the student's vocabulary, and the first few day's performance.

The prinicpal denied he was prejudiced. "After all," he maintained, "didn't I admit him to school?" What made

it clear that the principal was deeply opinionated and hence the holder of damaging categories was the fact that he was so resistant to using better information upon which initially to place the student, and the steady, day-to-day information which suggested that, while behind other students, the Black fullback was trying hard and making steady gains. Had the principal been open to that information, he could have predicted gains and responded accordingly, rather than being "surprised" when it "suddenly" came to his attention that the student had excelled in a low class.

Attitudes toward Physical Anomalies

While history suggests that racial discrimination is the major source of strife, discrimination based on any discernible physical difference is a problem. Since many physical disabilities have been carefully screened out of public schools, any sort of physical anomaly may take on the appearance of grotesque distortion, with corresponding difficulty of acceptance by teachers and students. The following case is an illustration:

> John Smith was born with a red birthmark over his left eye which continued to grow with granulation tissue gradually covering his eyes. John was at least equal to his peers academically, and began his school career as a docile student who was almost afraid to speak to anyone else, much less cause problems in class. But as his physical disfigurement became worse, so did his behavior. In the third grade, his teacher called in a psychologist to counsel this special problem. By this time John had stabbed several other children in the hands and arms

with scissors. At first, the injuries were thought to be accidents. Subsequently, he purposely struck out at another child who was teasing him because of his appearance. Finally, the family consulted with the school, and (at some risk to John's life) the growing disfigurement was removed. The residual scar was very noticeable, but not nearly so grotesque as before.

Still John's trouble continued. He was the brunt of jokes by his peers, and, what was worse, his teacher had real trouble dealing with him. Careful observation suggested that John was "sneaky": he tripped girls who passed his desk, he stole the ball when others were playing volleyball, he hid things on the teacher's desk, and so on. When another student attacked him, he again reverted to the scissors, this time inflicting a wound that required surgical attention. This brought in the psychologist. The teachers suggested this might be the time to get him into a separate school (like the other physically handicapped, her attitude said).

It appeared, however, that the teacher was superattentive to John, and his every act was under her careful surveillance. It was suggested that she reverse her approach: rather than observe him when he was "bad," she should award him attention when he was good. Further, the entire class was to enjoy a candy (paid for by John's father) when the class hour went well. John quickly stopped the disruptive behavior, and the teacher's perception of him underwent considerable change. While the teacher continued to think of him as handicapped, she saw a different handicap than before. Originally, the teacher thought of the handicap as ugliness, which was physically revolting, and her perception of John was that of a distorted and ugly human being. With some counseling, she began to see him as a child with serious problems who needed attention very badly and would do anything to get it. By the end of the year, John had become quite a normal-acting child, though his physical handicap remained.

Attitudes about Mentally Retarded and Behavior Problems

Although discrimination at one time generally meant unfair practices against racial minorities, recent experience has taught us that dicrimination against women, children, the aged, and the physically handicapped also flourishes. Now it is also clear that we have excluded many persons who learn slowly from full opportunities in the schools, and from other opportunities, both social and financial. But, as is the case in any form of discrimination, we need to know the rationale for such discriminations. Why are mentally retarded children segregated from the regular classroom? Why are they placed in special classrooms, where they often learn no academics? It certainly isn't because they cannot learn. After all, they learn to speak with little or no formal help. Classrooms are different places depending on whether there are slow learners present or not. This does not mean mainstreamed classes are worse; it does mean that the objectives of the classroom may be more heterogeneous than before.

The last class of persons against whom we can easily discriminate are those children we might here label "discipline-active." There are millions of children who are labeled "mentally retarded," or as having "learning disabilities," when actually the problem with these children is clearly one of management: they don't sit at

their desks, they have what we see as short attention spans and so on. While there are MR, LDs, and other disabilities for which there are clear physical reasons requiring special consideration, the children we refer to are those simply put into one or the other category for the convenience of managing them. The discrimination begins when we deprive them of experiences simply because they fit a category we have in our heads. We are really talking about children who have learned disruptive behavior patterns. Actually, these children are "diagnosed" from their behavior in classrooms, from poor performance in IQ tests, and from testimonials of parents, teachers, and other adults who have a difficult time controlling their behavior (they aren't compliant). The process of labeling them is, in itself, a part of the discriminatory proceudre. In short, we are intolerant of them as individuals, because we don't like their behavior. When we invent a diagnostic fiction, we feel we understand their problem, and can begin to look for medicine, or glasses, or some sort of regimen to treat them to correct what we don't like. But in so doing we deprive them of other rightful opportunities. It is all too easy to yield to the temptation to label such children; and then, once labeled, we need not examine our own interactions with them, and can excuse any failures of theirs on the diagnosis, rather than asking ourselves, "How could I improve the situation such that they would learn?" The following case example points this out:

In an inner-city "ghetto" school, 24 of the worst behavior problems in the fifth grade were put into one classroom. Combined in this classroom were those students labeled as mentally deficient, as incorrigible behavior problems, as having learning disabilities, as being underachievers, and as hyperkinetic. Rather than assigning a teacher with special training in learning disabilities, however, a volunteer was asked for, and one trained in agriculture was selected. The teacher went to class the first week with very high expectations. Soon, however, the cacophony of snorts, swearing, bickering, and insults began to erode those expectations. The children would let little occur in the classroom which the teacher considered useful.

Clearly, the first task was to gain control. The teacher set up a program dividing the group into teams of six with prizes for teams which reached minimum point levels. A weekly prize was awarded, as well as a daily truck ride for "winning" teams. Points could be earned for sitting properly at the sound of the bell, for having a book and pencil, for having an assignment paper at the end of the hour, and for trying the hour's lesson. Since a group nearing the points required for a prize lacked incentive to continue to act well, it was also found that negative points (subtraction of points from positive points) was effective, because a bad-acting student could penalize the group. Thus, peer pressure was generated against individual deviation in order to avoid penalty points by one "bad apple." In a few weeks, the bad-acting classroom was quiet, and the model of decorum. It was not the <u>end</u> of the task, because so many students had only rudimentary academic skills; and the teacher had yet to figure out how to teach even the most simple notions to this woefully deficient group. But by using challenges and a lot of his own creative powers, the lessons were laid out, and the students learned the materials he selected.

This teacher demonstrated, if to no one but himself, that even the kids who had been labeled as "hopeless" could be motivated to act properly and to learn academic material without medication or special academic gadgets.

Use of Categories by Peers

Thus far, we have limited our discussion to the teachers and administrators in the school system. It is not our intention to exclude students from the important interpersonal exchanges which include attitudes and categories leading to discrimination. We recognize that the most influential persons in a student's life are often other students. The process of attitude suppression and use of categories is used, often less subtly than with adults, by peers of the students in minority groups.

Peer Attitudes

Faculty aren't the only source of discrimination . We have heard of the battles that have occurred on school grounds early in the fight for desegregation. We know of the continuing animosities between dominant and minority racial groups, maintained solely by physical appearance. But this is not the only type of peer discrimination.

> Some Blacks were invited to attend high school in a "white" school district. This is considered statewide as a top-flight school district, and it was an "opportunity" for the cream of the Black communities. The Blacks quickly made names for themselves as very

> affable, fun guys to be with, and good athletes who could also be very good sports. While all students could freely attend proms and official school functions, Blacks were rarely asked to attend the private parties that followed. When one asked, he was told that he wouldn't want to come "stag." When he said he could get one of the (white) girls to come with him, he was told, "We like you, John, but not <u>that</u> much."

John in this case was told that it was the peer group's, and not the girl's, choice to like him. And that choice was clear: he was accepted as a peer to some degree, but not so far as selecting a potential sex partner.

There has been considerable recent interest in the development of prejudices in children, a good deal of it regarding how prejudices are learned. Within the school system, itself, there appear to be two major ways in which students are taught to hold negative attitudes about other students, and to develop categories accordingly. First, there are peer relations, which directly influence students. But equally direct in the development of prejudicial attitudes are the actions of faculty, who set examples for students to follow. While most teachers voice disapproval of prejudice toward others, many <u>behave</u> as if they are prejudiced, perhaps acting on the basis of their own categories about minorities. The following is an example:

> Martin Ross was a good-looking, young man who was admitted to a residential training unit (Job Corps). He was very slow, but his otherwise fine appearance resulted in his not being labeled "retarded." He was an

only child, used to adult attention, and compliant to the requests of adults. They usually like this, and Martin bordered on being obsequious in his endeavors to please the adults.

What was true of his attempt to ingratiate himself to adults was even more pronounced in his relations with his peers. He was reported by one staff to be polishing the boots of another student and running errands for others. This was a contemptuous joke among other students who were unaware of his mental deficiency. They continued to make him the butt of practical jokes and to take advantage of his attempts to be accepted. It was discovered by one of the staff that Martin was being used as a sex object by one and possibly two, male students.

A long and loud lecture was administered. A few days later Martin was beaten up, and the staff said that he had what was coming to him. A few days later the boy was beaten more severely, and lost part of the vision in one eye. Finally, the boy had to be removed from the unit because of the intolerance of the other boys.

It was as if the staff's own feelings said, "this person is not worthy of treatment as a human." And the students picked up the attitude and reflected it in their actions. A full investigation revealed that no less than 40 of the students knew of the sexual abuses and practical jokes played on the student, yet none had come forward to assist him. This incident reflected staff failure to deal impartially with a person who was "different." Instead, faculty members dealt with the situation in terms of their personal feelings, resulting in near tragedy and the loss of an important opportunity to learn skills which would later make the victim independent. This incident underscores

the importance of a full-scope Human Relations Program; the training must focus not only on the teachers and administrators, but must include the students as well.

Spontaneous Attitude Change

We have all been raised in a tradition which encourages development of negative attitudes toward certain groups. We, in the Human Relations Program don't consider it surprising that many of us maintain such attitudes, even though they are limiting not only to the victims, but also to ourselves (Oden & MacDonald, 1977). We recognize that we are all human learners, and that we learn the culture in which we are raised. However, we also recognize the need for attitude change on the part of many of use, especially those of us who influence the attitudes of others. That is, while we cannot fault members of our society for having learned negative attitudes about minority-group members, we must find ways to break the chair of negative attitude teaching. And one place to interrupt this destructive learning sequence is in the schools. Examination of a case history in attitude change may be instructive:

> One evening after class a teacher approached and asked if he could have a word with (author Oden). He said that he was greatly moved by the lecture on perceptions and labeling and wanted to share an event in support of this view about how disabling categories can be in teaching. We had earlier in the evening defined teaching as a way of maximizing anyone's potential. He said that years ago it would have been correct to have labeled him as a typical "redneck"

Texas cop. And he had been proud of it. But over the years he said he had gradually become aware of himself and really didn't like what he saw. He decided to go back to school, finish his education, and become a teacher and high school football coach.

Needing summer employment, he applied to work in a summer camp for handicapped children, though he had no idea what that involved. He was chosen for the job, and when he went to the camp director for an interview he was taken on a "tour" of the facilities. He discovered these children, ages 7 to 14, to be "physical wrecks." Some had no legs, no arms, some were in braces. "I had never seen so many 'deformed' children in my life," he said. "I was actually sick to my stomach. I turned to the camp director and said, 'I can't teach these teratogenies. I can't stand the sight of them, and there's no way I could be happy--me with them or them with me. Thank you for the opportunity, but no thank you,' and I left." The camp director phoned him back about a week later and explained that he had several persons willing to take the position, but that it would be impossible for any of them to come on board for at least another week. He asked him please to reconsider and help them out for this period of time. He agreed, and his very first contact had an impact that would affect him for the rest of his life.

A very cute 10-year-old girl in a wheelchair came up and asked in her petite voice, "Mr. Amerson, would you please open this box of jigsaw puzzle pieces for me, please?" The teacher said he looked at her and actually laughed--the little girl had no arms. "Suzanne," he said, "why waste your time and mine with this silly notion about your being able to work on the jigsaw puzzle? You know and I know there 's no way on earth you can do it, so why bother me?" Suzanne looked at him and her blue eyes snapped. "I'm sorry if you feel I'm wasting <u>your</u> time," she replied, "but I really don't feel I'm wasting <u>my</u> time. Would you please take the cover off of the box for me?" He complied reluctantly, and recalls saying as he did so, "I think all of you here really expect miracles. But I'm

only going to be here for a week. I'll humor you." With that he took off the top and started to spill the pieces on to the floor. "Oh, don't do that," Suzanne said, "I'm quite capable of handling that." She picked up the box with her feet and spilled the contents onto the floor. With her toes she started to assemble the puzzle.

"When I saw what she was doing," he said, "I turned and went into the men's room and cried. 'My God,' I said, 'I'm at it again.' How did I dare to put constraints on people based on my perceptions of what they can do." That was eight years ago; he's been working with the handicapped ever since and loving every moment of it.

This teacher's story is a moving illustration of how one's deeply seated categories can, through self-questioning, be turned into a positive force. The teacher admitted that he had had negative feelings about children with such seemingly disabling handicaps, perhaps related to some self-doubts of his own, but said that he was ashamed of those feelings. Once he began to deal directly with the children, and to ignore the ideas contained in his categorization of these children as "handicapped," the negative feelings began to break up and he had many positive moments. It wasn't always easy, he said, but there was no question in his mind that it was worth it.

Human Relations Programs in Schools

There are several aspects to Human Relations training in school settings. The one which is appropriate to discuss here regards the individual teacher who is willing to say to himself, "I don't know whether I hold biased

views--I probably do, but I'm willing to do something about it." This sort of self-inquiry is essential if the teacher is to change those negative attitudes. No one else can do it. In fact, we have found that the harder we try to influence someone else who is obviously biased against some minority, the more resistant that person becomes to thinking in a constructive way.

Human Relations training, then, is a process in which a person examines his or her own negative attitudes, complete with categories about minority-group members, and begins to expose the ideas about the minority to real-life experience. This process can occur within a single individual, and we believe that it can also happen between two people. It is difficult to describe the relationship that exists between two people, because one person does not "teach" the other to be "unbiased." We have already suggested that this can be the quickest way to forestall this sensitive process. Rather, the relationship between the biased person and the confidant, as it were, must be one of openness, honesty, and self-disclosure. At the present time, we consider this an art, because we have not yet found the key "secrets" or variables which define the relationship, nor have we identified well the process. We have now examined the process in labs for four years and feel, like others, that warmth and genuineness are important. But there seems more to it than that. We suspect that it has

to do with the person who wishes to change, rather than with the person we might designate as the "teacher."

Though we have met with frustration in our attempts to identify the conditions which foster the process, we do know that it can occur. And to those in whom it occurs, it is a significant thing; as they readily admit, their teaching improves vastly and their perceptions of themselves are greatly enhanced.

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